

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training

Foreign Affairs Oral History Program

Foreign Service Spouse Series

ELIZABETH MARTIN

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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Q: This is Jewell Fenzi on Wednesday, November 28, 1990. I'm interviewing Elizabeth Martin at her home in Washington DC.

So why don't you just give me your name?

MARTIN: I'm Mrs. James V. Martin, Jr., or Elizabeth S. Martin - everyone calls me Betty.

(Looking through her scrapbook) - the nursery school is the thing that I began with Lee Clark, wife of G. Edward Clark...This was our first post overseas, Bombay. Jim was there from '46 to '48. I didn't arrive until '47 because I had to stay in America to give birth to our second child. As there was yet no plane service from America to India I had to go by ship. A freighter, and it took 35 days. With my two small children! My sister went with me; my mother thought I'd never make it otherwise and she was probably right.

The only thing I had thought I might describe for you was the nursery school that we started in Bombay, Lee Clark's and my first post overseas. (She names two women who were involved - Molly Love, Eleanor Bilimoria.) Both my husband and I had graduated from DePauw University, he in '38 and I in '39. He went to Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy from '38 to '41. I was a chemist and to be near him I got a job across the river in Boston as a lab technician.

Before our first tour in Bombay we had no tour of duty in Washington, which I thought was crazy, because I didn't know anything about the Foreign Service. Jim attended the Foreign Service School, a predecessor to the Foreign Service Institute, but I had very little training in Washington before we went...

Q: Did you have any at all, specifically?

MARTIN: Not really. I'm trying to think...No, none at all and I didn't know what it was all about. The first time I had been outside the United States was when (she laughs) we went to Bombay, India. My husband went ahead of me, my sister and the two children. This was just after WW II, '46. No commercial planes were flying to India. The Department wanted me to go by "the shortest and the most usual route, which they interpreted as going from Washington or from Rockford [Illinois] across the Pacific and to all the countries I would have to stop in, in order to get to Bombay on the West side of India! I said - not in so many words - that it was "crazy," that I should take a freighter across the Atlantic, and through the Mediterranean. The Department got me lots of visas since I would have had to stop in so many countries if I went the Pacific route. Finally they agreed that crossing the Atlantic was probably a more convenient route.

I was at home in Rockford with my family while my husband had gone on to India. It was terribly hard right after World War II to get railroad accommodations, even to reserve a pullman. My parents took me to Chicago. For at least a week I had daily to extend my train reservations because departure of the freighter kept being put off, so I'd extend once more. Finally I got to New York. Fortunately I had an aunt there and she took us into her apartment until the ship left.

The freighter was a terrible ship. (We had to travel on an American carrier.) It had been used as a cargo ship during the War; and it hadn't been cleaned up. There were two chain guardrails around the deck but no wood partitions as there are aboard regular passenger ships. I was scared to death for my older child who was walking around - she could have crawled through the guardrails. There were 12 passengers. My sister had never been out of the U.S., so it was a sort of lark for her; she was younger than I.

Q: The State Department didn't pay her way.

MARTIN: Oh no!

My three-year-old was running around at that point. I had a contraption like a dog harness, with a leash, and kept her on that. The First Mate had strung a rope across the deck outside the cabin, so I could tie her onto that like a clothesline, the leash sliding back and forth. The child was very hyperactive. The other child was a baby and I had to go down into the hold of the ship to make her formula everyday. I'd carried powdered milk with me and nobody in those days that I knew of had used powdered milk, so I experimented with it before I left Rockford to make sure the formula would agree with her. I would have nursed her all the way, but this was a long trip, 35 days or so. I was scared that if something happened I wouldn't know how to do a formula, or whether it would agree with her.

We sailed from New York and we stopped in Savannah, Georgia. The First Mate, the second in command of the ship, had a doctor come aboard the ship to look at my younger one, Sue, who had a cold. She slept in the baby buggy that I took aboard in our stateroom. So in the stateroom were my sister Pris and I, and two children, one being the baby who slept in the baby buggy.

Q: Your first romantic trans-Atlantic voyage.

MARTIN: Yes. And as I say, the trip had been postponed and postponed. Fortunately I had an aunt who lived in New York so I could stay there until we actually got on the ship. As we went down the river to start for the Atlantic, something happened to the rudder or the steering mechanism and we had to go back again. So we spent one more day in New York before we finally set sail. We stopped in Savannah, Georgia, and then we went across the Atlantic and through the Mediterranean, and through the Suez Canal. It was quite a trip.

Q: There must have been quite a few expenses getting ready for this trip.

MARTIN: I guess there were, I don't remember much about that. The State Department didn't reimburse us for anything. Fortunately, I had my aunt in New York. Otherwise I might have had to stay in a hotel, and it was very difficult to get reservations. I mean hotel reservations were really almost nonexistent. I even had a problem getting a reservation on the train from Chicago to New York because all the service men were going back and forth and filling the trains. They had first priority.

Q: So you made it to Bombay.

MARTIN: ...made it to Bombay and my sister stayed with me for three months because she had never been overseas, and it was an experience for her. So she stayed with us. She was a God-send on the trip, I must say.

Q: Your mother was quite right.

MARTIN: It was funny the various things I was given by all of my mother's friends to take on the ship that "might come in handy." One was a 4-inch long safety pin.

Q: Did you establish a nursery school right away?

MARTIN: No.

Q: Which of these things came first? Gandhi was assassinated when?

MARTIN: While we were in India.

Q: And the independence celebration from Britain?

MARTIN: Yes, yes. That was while we were there. Independence Day, August 15th, 1947 - a big parade all over Bombay, all over India really. Gandhi was assassinated - I don't have the date, but it was while we were there, [it was January 30, 1948] The one thing I remember...we were in an apartment by then...Jim had gone ahead, and he had had difficulty even getting a place for us to stay and we lived in a "boarding house" for about two months. This is the kind of place the British lived in. When we first got there we had our meals downstairs in a general dining room. Later we got an apartment in Padma Mansion which was just at the base of Malabar Hill which was a nice part of Bombay. When Gandhi was assassinated, there was martial law in Bombay for a while.

We were in our apartment by that time and we had five servants. And besides that the man who came in every day to clean the toilets. Nobody else in the household would do that. I had a cook and a bearer, and a bearer's helper who was called a hamal, and a nursemaid to take care of the children, and the laundry man who did the washing. I insisted that he do it in the bathtub in our apartment. Otherwise he would have taken it away, and who knows who would have worn it in between. So he came to the apartment and did the laundry in our bathtub.

Q: How was it managing five servants?

MARTIN: It was horrendous. I had never had servants at all. My parents had had a laundry person who came and did the laundry one day a week, but I had never had servants. But the bearer (what they called number one boy in China, we called a bearer in India), was very good.

He was recommended by someone who knew my husband and who had been there when my husband first went out to Bombay. This friend knew of a bearer who had been working for somebody else who was just leaving. So we took him on, and he was very good. He spoke English. Then I got a nursemaid for the children who also had worked for Americans. The bearer, a Buddhist convert, was of no caste. The Indian constitution sought to eliminate castes, but everyone knew what caste everyone else was, or what they had been.

I had quite a hierarchy. The bearer had been an untouchable in south India, in Madras state. Then there was the cook, and the cook was absolutely independent of everyone else. He wouldn't take orders from the bearer, though the bearer was supposed to run the household. The cook was a Roman Catholic. And then I had a nursemaid who also wouldn't take orders from anyone but me. She was Hindu and she looked down on my bearer because he had been an untouchable before. I don't remember what caste she had been.

The bearer had a helper to clean the apartment. He got someone he knew who came from his own town years ago. The helper took orders from the bearer all right, but the nursemaid didn't like him. They were both Hindu but she knew his caste. The hamal (helper) was a higher caste than the bearer, actually, but he worked for the bearer. The sweeper came in once a day to clean the toilets and the bathrooms. No, he only cleaned the toilets, someone else, the hamal, cleaned the bathroom floor, and the bathtub, that sort of thing. It had a tiled floor, Jim said stone tile. It was cold, and I was told not to let my children sit on the floor without a pillow or something because they would get dysentery or some kind of intestinal upset, because of the cold floor.

Q: Did all that division of labor, and keeping all those people sorted out, bother you?

MARTIN: Oh, yes, but my bearer told me what I should do. Rice was rationed and the cook went every day to get our rations as well as rations for the rest of the servants. He brought the rations back and he gave me our sack of rice. Of course, we could exist without rice but the servants could not. So when he gave me our sack of rice, the bearer told me I should keep it in our bedroom. I kept it in the aimirah or armoire, a portable closet that you hung clothes in and which could be locked. Anyway, every morning the cook would come in, and I would dole out rice for the day. I think he took care of the rice for the servants, I'm not sure. But he insisted that I keep our rice in our room. We didn't eat our rice every day so every day I doled out a certain amount for the servants to augment their rations. All of this was quite something. But my bearer was very good in telling me that I should keep these things away from the kitchen where strangers might have access to them. You don't know who goes in and out of your kitchen there.

The nursemaid slept in the room with the children on the floor. We had servants' quarters - about three little rooms in the back and the servants lived there. I wasn't supposed to go back there at all. I wasn't supposed to go into the kitchen either but I did, mostly to make the milk formula - I made the milk in the kitchen which was very primitive. A faucet provided cold water, and a hole in the concrete floor under it, the sink. For cooking we had three charcoal braziers with tin boxes fitted on them for ovens. Only boiled water was safe. We cooled it in a large earthenware jar. I used it to mix the formula. We had an electric hotplate which ran on different voltage from ours here - the embassy gave it to us as I remember - I boiled the water in the children's room.

Q: But you always did the formula yourself?

MARTIN: Yes, I always did the formula myself. In fact, this started when I was aboard the freighter that went from New York to Savannah, Georgia. The baby had a stopped-up nose and we had a hotplate and were steaming water in our stateroom. I was scared to death that if we got rough weather it would tip over, or the electric hotplate would catch fire, or something. In India I boiled the water in what had been the container for the bottles - the sterilizer.

I put the bottles back into the sterilizer and a little man would bring a cake of ice to us - we had no refrigerator, we had only an ice icebox and that was lent to us by the consulate. We chopped up ice and put it in this same sterilizer, and I kept the bottles for the day like that rather than put them down in the large ice icebox which the cook went in and out of, and other people did too. This was all done in the children's nursery. We finally did get the large ice icebox which was an improvement but I still kept the bottles with ice upstairs in the children's room because I didn't want anyone to open the bottles, or look at them, or taste them, or whatever. Ice was delivered every day.

Q: That was quite an introduction to the Foreign Service, and you were there for two years.

MARTIN: I was only there for a little over a year; my husband went ahead.

Q: So when Gandhi was assassinated, what happened?

MARTIN: Oh, it was scary. Jim was at the office when he heard about it and he telephoned me immediately. We did have a phone, and he said, "Don't let any of the servants go outside, and you stay inside yourself." I guess the consulate heard about it first, and they were all supposed to telephone their wives. So we stayed in the apartment and I didn't let the servants go out either. Jim came home later on. He had a car. We had bought it and it had been shipped to Bombay.

Q: They shipped the car for you? Or did you pay to ship it yourself?

MARTIN: The State Department paid for shipment. Jim went ahead of me. He left for Bombay on June 3rd, 1946, and it took him 52 days. He arrived July 25th. I arrived on March 17th, 1947, and we left Bombay April 4th, 1948. He was there from '46 to '48 and the reason we left actually was, the State Department had started Japanese language training and Jim's application for language training had been approved.

Jim had been born in Tokyo and lived in Japan most of his childhood. He had studied Japanese in the Navy during the war and had been reading Japanese cables, codes and things. So he had had Japanese already but not with the State Department and with limited vocabulary because he was reading military things. So, when the State Department notice came around to the consulate that they were starting Japanese language training, Jim asked for it, and was then sent. We left Bombay in '48 and went to Yale for the language and area training. He had studied at Harvard under Reischauer for the Navy, and in each case his studies were cut short. He never really had time to finish a course because they needed him always before anything was finished. So we went to New Haven. We had the year in New Haven, and again, he had to find housing for us and by this time I had two children, and housing was still difficult. It was the summer of '48 and on into '49 because he was at Yale a year.

Then he went to Tokyo, Japan, and again I couldn't go with him - our second separation - because housing was very hard to get in Tokyo at that time. Anyway, he was there from mid-July '49, and I arrived in Tokyo December '49 just before Christmas. I'd gone back again to stay with my family. Fortunately I had a family who had a big house, and then I went to Tokyo. At that time there were planes so I could fly to Tokyo and I flew alone with the two children. That was an ordeal too. I talked the State Department into allowing me to have a berth on the plane. This was the kind of plane that had upper berths like a train. At first they didn't want to give that to me, and I said, "Look, I'm traveling with two children, one is a baby, I simply have to have a berth to sleep in." We went back and forth telephoning from Rockford to Washington and they finally allowed as how yes, maybe I should have a berth. So I did get a berth on the plane.

Q: Good.

MARTIN: And I flew across the Pacific. We stopped in Hawaii, and we stopped in Wake Island, and then Tokyo. Again, transportation was difficult but Jim's sister lived in Palo Alto, California, which was fortunate. I flew actually from Chicago to San Francisco, and then I stopped in Palo Alto for a couple of days to stay with my sister-in-law to kind of recover from the flight with two children. Then I flew to Tokyo alone with them.

Q: How many hours was it to Tokyo in those days?

MARTIN: I don't remember how many hours. Iflew from San Francisco to Hawaii. We put down in Hawaii, in Wake Island, and Guam and then to Tokyo. We had to detour because there were strong winds coming the wrong way from Tokyo. I think we were supposed to stop in Guam, but we stopped in Wake and Guam both. Planes were not really used for civilian travel very much yet in those days. I arrived at the airport in Tokyo and my husband met me, thank goodness, and one other friend whom I had known before also came, so it was rather exciting to get there. By that time we had a house to live in. Family housing (which the military provided) was available only to those who had spent 18 months or more in military service abroad. MacArthur insisted upon it.

Q: Well, yes, of course. He didn't come back until '50 or '51.

MARTIN: That's why I had to wait. I had to wait until Jim had a promise of housing, and actually we moved into it right away. But it was difficult to get housing.

Q: What was post-war Tokyo like? We were really an occupational force then weren't we?

MARTIN: Yes, but Jim was in the State Department. It wasn't called State Department, they were political advisers to MacArthur. It was the Office of the Political Adviser, and there were some State Department people there.

Q: But you really weren't there as a regular State Department couple to cultivate the Japanese?

MARTIN: No. Jim had a car. And my friend, who was already in Tokyo met me along with Jim at the airport, also had a car. Her husband had been a language officer too but I guess he'd been in the military one more month than Jim - my husband was in the Navy during the war, translating Japanese. Anyway, we had a house by that time, so we moved into it directly although Jim had had to live in kind of a BOQ before that.

So '49 to '51 we were in Tokyo. Then from '51 to '53 we were in the Kobe-Osaka area. We lived in Shukugawa, and then in Ashiya, but those are suburbs between Kobe and Osaka.

Q: S-h-u-k-u-g-a-w-a. And then Ashiya? A-s-h-i-y-a.

MARTIN: The house in Shukugawa was military housing still, and the house that we picked in Ashiya - we knew that the peace treaty was going to be signed - we knew we could stay on with the State Department. So we got the house in Ashiya, and we lived there - it was a nice house. It was a block from the beach.

Q: So in spite of the lack of allowances, you really lived well.

MARTIN: Oh, yes.

Q: Did you live well in Bombay too?

MARTIN: With five servants, yes.

Q: Was the apartment nice once you got it, and spacious?

MARTIN: No, it wasn't what you'd call a nice apartment but it was big enough. Everyone lived in apartments in Bombay because Bombay is on an island like Manhattan, and there is not much room so everything was built up instead of spread out. It was large, I mean we had a huge, huge living room - larger than this room; and a dining room, a hall that went between them, and two bedrooms on that level. Then there were little stairs that went part way up, and a large room for the nursery for the children, and a separate kitchen, and about three servants quarters in the back. It was what we would call an apartment in this country.

In Tokyo we lived in a house, actually it was half a house that the military had used, and then after the peace treaty State Department could use it as one of their houses. The State Department didn't have any real housing except from the military. The house we were in in Tokyo was so-so. Lots of people had lovely houses with lovely gardens but we were there early on, and rather than being separated anymore, Jim decided to take it. So we lived in that from '49 to '51 but he had lived in bachelor quarters before that until I came.

Q: Were you permitted to go to the peace treaty signing, or not?

MARTIN: No. That was done in San Francisco.

Q: Nothing done in Tokyo at all?

MARTIN: Oh, yes, about a year before the peace treaty when John Foster Dulles came to Tokyo to lay the ground work for it. This was soon after the Korean War had begun. MacArthur was not only involved in war strategy, but he was still Supreme Commander, Allied Powers (SCAP). The State Department staffed the Diplomatic Section of SCAP. Headquarters, also called the Office of the U.S. Political Adviser, which, after the peace treaty, became the U.S. embassy.

Q: What was Jim doing?

MARTIN: At first he set up a translating unit in the Political Adviser's office. He supervised daily translations of items in the Japanese press and wrote weekly and monthly reviews. Later he was transferred to consular work - citizenship and visas. The Consulate General in Tokyo was part of the Political Adviser's Office. And the Consul General in Tokyo supervised consular work throughout Japan.

Q: And what did he do in Kobe?

MARTIN: He was a Consul. Most of the time he was doing economic reporting out of the Osaka office of the Kobe-Osaka Consulate General.

Q: So you had to move and set up a household all over again?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. I was lucky to get a nice house though.

Q: And you were studying Japanese?

MARTIN: I studied Japanese, yes. The State Department did not pay for it. I had a woman teacher who came to the house. I had been told - well, Jim knew this - that women's language is different from men's in Japan. The high class women use very polite language, and people said, "You must not learn the rough Japanese." So I had a woman teacher who came to the house. The State Department didn't pay for that. Then when we went to the Kobe-Osaka area I didn't study Japanese, but I used it a lot. By that time I could speak it. I didn't ever learn to read or write it, and I did this on good advice because it's a long period that you take to learn Kanji, the characters. And I wanted to be able to use the language, and to talk with people. So I just learned to talk, but I learned a polite women's language.

Jim used to drive back and forth up that highway from Osaka to Kobe. Part of the time he was in Osaka, part of the time he was in Kobe. From 1953 to '56 we were in Fukuoka where he was in charge of our Consulate. There were still a lot of American military in Japan. Fukuoka is on the island of Kyushu which is separated from Honshu which is the main island of Japan. So Jim being Consul, the top State Department officer there, was the top State Department person in all the island of Kyushu. Americans were in Nagasaki also, but although Fukuoka was the top, it was just a Consulate still. We traveled all the way around Kyushu by car which was another adventure - to be experienced to understand. We went with the Forsters who were USIS people. The four of us drove a USIS car around the island of Kyushu, and Cliff Forster met all the various people in the USIS libraries, people he needed to contact, and both Cliff and Jim talked with Japanese mayors and governors.

Q: How were you greeted? After all, we'd been a conquering force, we'd dropped two atom bombs on them. How were you greeted?

MARTIN: Very well. Jim had gone to Japan right after the war. He went both to Nagasaki, and Hiroshima because he was a language officer in the Navy to interview Japanese people. He was an interpreter for a Navy team on the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. So he had been to both of those places but the Japanese were very, very pleased to have us, and particularly because we spoke Japanese. My Japanese was not good, but I used polite women's Japanese and the women appreciated that. I think that helped immensely. Then when we got to Fukuoka I studied Japanese again quite earnestly, still not reading or writing although I learned the Kana which is a kind of alphabet. It's not the characters. I learned the Kana which uneducated Japanese people read, and the newspapers at that time still had Kana beside the characters so the Japanese themselves who couldn't read Kanji, could read the Kana and know what it said. Kana is like an alphabet. It's phonetic and gives you the pronunciation of the characters. There's both Hira Gana, and Kata Kana. The Hira Gana is used to give pronunciation of Japanese characters. The Kata Kana is to give pronunciation of foreign words. The Japanese have adopted a lot of foreign words; for instance, coffee was kohee and that was written in Kata Kana because it came from a foreign word. So those are alphabet systems, but the Kanji are characters.

Q: So you really had quite a bit of social intercourse with Japanese women?

MARTIN: Yes, quite a lot. Not in Tokyo, but in Kobe-Osaka, oh yes, we had a lot. We lived in a Japanese house but it was patterned after an English house, and the Japanese family lived in their own Japanese style house next door. Yes, we had a lot of contact with them, and particularly since I spoke Japanese. It was very rudimentary Japanese that I spoke first but by the time I got to Fukuoka I spoke quite a lot of Japanese.

I remember we had a cooking class, it was in Fukuoka - the American military was still there, and a lot of the military wives wanted to take cooking lessons. So I got a Japanese teacher who later became quite famous and went on television in Japan. They didn't have television when we were there, it was only radio. But anyway, I got this woman to give lessons and they came to our house, and we had cooking lessons, both Japanese and Chinese. This woman had done Chinese cooking too. And I was the interpreter for her - she just demonstrated, and spoke in Japanese, and I interpreted for the Americans. But, of course, she knew that my Japanese was limited so she tried to use words that she thought I'd understand. But she didn't speak English.

Q: That's a certain level of proficiency to be able to do that. How many people were in Kobe-Osaka when you were there, and in Fukuoka? How many Americans in the Consulate? How many State Department people?

MARTIN: Not very many. I could get Jim to tell you that.

Q: It doesn't really matter. I just wondered if you had a large community?

MARTIN: Our families could go because the military assigned housing immediately. There was another Consul there who had studied Japanese with Jim. His wife, who had grown up in Japan and whom Jim knew as a boy also spoke Japanese. Later they were again assigned there and, as Consul General, they got the lovely house that I had picked originally. But when we wanted it there had been a fire in that house and it needed too much renovation. The State Department didn't have the money to fix it up, so we hadn't been able to live there. I knew the Americans who lived in it when they couldn't have it. American business people, they were "cotton people." Commercial people had more money and they fixed the house, and they built a swimming pool. My children learned how to swim in that pool, in the house that I would have liked to have had.

Q: Well, you benefited from it somewhat anyway.

MARTIN: Yes. We came back in 1956 and then were in Washington until '62. Rangoon - '62 to '64, and again Jim went ahead of me. I stopped briefly in India to put Sue into an American high school because there was no American high school in Burma.

Q: Did the children go with you?

MARTIN: Yes, they went with me.

Q: They must have been getting ready for college about then.

MARTIN: No, not quite. And I had a third child by that time.

Q: I guess when you were in Okinawa they started college.

MARTIN: Yes, Okinawa, after Rangoon. Okinawa from '64 to '67, and then Australia '68 to '70. We were in Washington for six years; that's the only Washington duty we had until '70 to '73. One point of criticism I have is that I had never been overseas, and we went right away to these hardship posts.

Q: Without training, no preparation.

MARTIN: No training, no nothing. I went to one meeting where there were some Foreign Service wives and somebody told us about wearing white gloves, and dropping cards. I mean, the old protocol that they didn't use anymore. So when I got to Bombay I went very dutifully and made my calls, when we were first in Bombay...

Q: In 1946 the only spouse training was very informally done by a woman named Cornelia Bassell. Possibly Romaine Alling had taken over at that point, but I don't think so.

MARTIN: I didn't have anything [training].

Q: There was really no formal training until...you would have been in Fukuoka when Mrs. Regina Blake took over.

MARTIN: I'm trying to think where I went. We went down to State Department or something and learned about when you should wear gloves, and I dutifully bought white gloves. I had calling cards made, and learned how to use them. And Jim had calling cards. I must have called on somebody in Bombay. John J. MacDonald, the Consul General in Bombay didn't have a wife. But I called on somebody in the business community and made an arrangement. I had a driver; I didn't know my way around. It must have been Bombay because I didn't have a driver in Tokyo - I drove myself. But I called on this woman and first gave my cards to the bearer. Of course, everyone had lots of servants in Bombay, and then the servant dutifully took them to the head of the household and came back and said, "Yes, please come in." And I went in and sat down and I said that my husband was with the consulate, and she had not the slightest idea that I was making a formal call, or anything.

Q: Now who was she?

MARTIN: I'm trying to think. The wife of one of the American businessmen there. She had been there a long time and knew all the Americans.

Q: Her name doesn't matter.

MARTIN: Bombay, J. Jefferson Jones III. He was there, but John MacDonald was the Consul General and he was a bachelor too. That's it, they were bachelors so I had no one to call on in the Consulate, but there were some important people there - Americans. There was Caltex, National City Bank, and several other American businesses. They were sort of top people who knew the ropes and everything. So I asked Mac - he was the Consul General - Delhi was the capital, of course, and Calcutta had a Consul General.

Q: Maybe Bombay was a Consulate General.

MARTIN: Yes, though we sloppily called it the Consulate. It was just after the war and it was rugged. Bombay wasn't a place that you took children to really, with all this boiling of water and whatnot, but we did have servants. So I went and called on...I remember the first one I called on, and I guess it must have been Stan Vac Co., the oil people, and she didn't know why I had called. And I finally said, "I have just arrived and I'm with the Consulate, and I thought I'd like to make a call since you're important and have a good business here." This kind of thing. Really, she literally didn't know what was happening until I said something. I called on somebody else after that, the National City Bank and Caltex were top American businesses. And they had been there during the war, but I don't think the women had been there then.

Since Mac, our Consul General, didn't have a wife, no one had gone through this procedure at all after the war so I was the first one to do calling. It was an experience, but later, of course, I got to know these people very well and I was glad that I had gone, but I had to explain what I was there for.

Q: You mentioned earlier that you weren't really interested in the spouse issues when they were setting forth the guidelines for wives. Did you feel that you just did what needed to be done, and it didn't need to be spelled out for you?

MARTIN: I guess so. When I was here I went to everything that I was asked to go to, and told to go to, but there wasn't much, that's all. And then this other thing...this was '70.

Q: Oh, yes.

MARTIN: I mean, I'd been to all these posts at that point.

Q: So you weren't interested because it was all behind you.

MARTIN: Yes, yes. I mean, why tell me to go call on people, and wear white gloves, and things like that? By the time the war was over they weren't doing that so much anyway. But there wasn't that much of an organization. As I say, I was sort of surprised but I went to things that were here in Washington. We had our overseas posts before we ever had a posting in Washington, except that I had been in Washington during the war while Jim was a Navy language officer.

Q: But being here with three children as a Foreign Service wife was quite different.

MARTIN: Yes. But I didn't have the three children until '49, David was born in '49.

Q: But when you came back '56 to '62 is the longest you were here, wasn't it?

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: So the longest time you were here was from 1956 to 1962. What happened in spouse training in those years was that we got Congressionally approved funds. So in 1962, if you took training when you went out, it would have been under Mary Vance Trent at the Foreign Service Institute.

MARTIN: Yes, but Mary Vance Trent...I know her because she was in Australia later on.

Q: Maybe she hadn't taken over.

MARTIN: I don't think she had.

Q: All right. Then it was Regina Blake.

MARTIN: Mrs. Blake. Yes, she was the one.

Q: She was there until '60, and in 1960 Congress made the FSI stop giving the wives courses because they were using unauthorized funds for spouse training. So there was a two year gap.

MARTIN: I was in Washington in 1960 and went to a lecture in which we were told about dropping cards, but I think it was Mrs. Blake.

Q: That sounds like Mrs. Blake's course.

MARTIN: Yes, it was Mrs. Blake and it was just a couple of lectures, as I remember, and nothing else. Then we went in '62 to Rangoon. Actually I left DC in '62 - '58 to '62 DC, and Rangoon '62 to '64, but Jim went to Rangoon ahead of me.

Q: He seems to always have gone ahead of you, and left you to pack up and follow with the children.

MARTIN: He did for India and Japan. But we traveled most of the way to Rangoon together. I got detoured en route to put Sue in school in India. '62 to '64 we were in Rangoon, and that was nice. We had good housing there, lousy climate...it was an embassy, and it was relatively small and we knew the Ambassador and his wife on first name basis. Rangoon was an interesting post, but it still was not as organized as it got to be after I left. Then '64 to '67 was Okinawa but, of course, the military was still there. It was before the reversion to Japan, so the military people were in control. But, however, we had lovely housing because by that time State Department was recognized as having a function. The General lived there. There were lovely quarters up on top of a hill, and an officers' club nearby...and the General was the top man. But Jim, as his Political Adviser, was the senior State Department person on the island, and we lived across the street from the General, it was a nice arrangement. There were a lot of colonels wives. Jim was the adviser to the High Commissioner who was the General.

[Mr. Martin in background]

MR. MARTIN: The Lieutenant General had two military hats and one civilian hat. His civilian hat was High Commissioner, and he was in charge of the civil government, and in that respect I was his political adviser.

MARTIN: Okay, but he was a General - Lieutenant General.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, he was IX Corps, and one other position, in charge of the base.

Q: So Mary Vance Trent was in Australia when you were there?

MARTIN: Not when we were there. She was there later, but I later met her here with a group that had been in Australia.

Q: So you really were here in Washington '70 until '73 when all of the ferment in women's issues was going on. Did you take part in any of the AAFSW activities?

MARTIN: No, not much other than...okay, I guess there was ferment then. By that time we had more to do with people who had been in Japan, and posts where we'd been. Jim was a Japanese language officer, and I spoke Japanese, but we had much more to do with people who had been in Japan than anything else. I went to anything that came up that wives were supposed to, but it wasn't...

Q: So really the reason you were at that meeting was because of your Japanese connection with Peggy Morgan more than anything else.

MARTIN: That's right. Peggy knew me from Japan.

Q: At that meeting, was there any discussion of, "No, we can't put our guidelines like this. These are the '70s." Was there some discussion like that?

MARTIN: There were two groups. There were the younger women who wanted to run their own lives, and not be run by State Department. And there were a few people, like me - I remember talking with someone who'd been through it all - and I was just really bored with it. I'd gone through it, and I had had to learn on my own, and nobody had taught me. I had carefully bought white gloves, and a hat and everything and who wore hats in Bombay, for goodness sake.

Q: It's interesting if there was that division between the women. It's interesting that the guidelines went through in spite of the dissension.

MARTIN: Actually I was a little put out by it because I was of the old school obviously; I'd gone through all of this and I had never had training. I went to some other woman's house here in Washington who got together some Foreign Service people. But it was all old hat to me and I really wasn't interested and if anyone had asked me to have a group of young wives, and tell them what to do, or how it is, I would have gladly done it. But nobody said anything about that. I was aware that something was being set up but I was sort of fed up with Foreign Service wives at that point anyway. If it was required, I went.

Q: It's interesting. I guess the Japanese connection is really the basis.

MARTIN: That's how Peggy knew me.

Q: And yet Peggy's name doesn't appear in here. I'm still perplexed on that.

MARTIN: I'm surprised that my name is there because I don't remember having had much input at all. We did go to a meeting at Peggy's house...there was a meeting to begin with of a lot of Foreign Service wives someplace, some State Department building, and I and a few others had been through it all, but mostly they were young wives. Stansbury, I think it was she who did it. I thought it was a good idea. If somebody had given that to me before I went, I probably would have had fewer headaches than I had. I think it's a good idea, but I had very little input on it.

Q: I think it's interesting that at that time you really had no sense that history was being made vis-a-vis Foreign Service women. It was just another meeting, yet actually what was happening at that time, was that the relationship between the spouse and the Service was being changed.

MARTIN: Also, by the time we got to Fukuoka...there was one wife there and she was not an American, I think, but she had some training. However, she had a profession and she went ahead and followed her profession. She was a doctor and this in my day would not have been done, and I was a little surprised but, okay, apparently it seemed to be all right.

Q: Oh, so some of the young women...this is a long time ago, this is 18 years ago that this meeting took place...so the young women were agitating to follow their own careers.

MARTIN: The main thing was that women who had training here, and most wives were well-educated, and some of them had specific skills or jobs of some sort, and then they got sent overseas. Some of them stayed back to finish their jobs, some of them didn't want to go overseas, some of them went overseas but they lost a lot of [career] time because they couldn't continue doing what they were doing, and they couldn't continue it overseas. There was a lot of dissent about that. And I was frankly surprised, there was one wife who stayed behind because she had a profession and she wanted to continue it, and she didn't go with her husband, and later they were divorced.

Q: I think you must have been included in this because you were a voice for Foreign Service tradition.

MARTIN: And I must say we thought the young wives coming up were...well, I did have a profession...I was a chemist originally, but I didn't do anything with it after those first three years in Boston.

That was the end of it. Then, of course, I had children.

Q: Did you really mind giving it up for the Foreign Service and your children?

MARTIN: No, not really because if I'd stayed on...but you see we were sent to Washington first for a short time. I went into a doctor's office once for a short time but I didn't like it, and it wasn't the kind of lab work that I had done. I was doing research, and then we got sent overseas so that was the end of that. Actually I was interested in one place...one wife came who was a doctor in her own right, and I guess that must have been Fukuoka, and she wanted to continue practicing, and did. There was an Army hospital there, the military was still there, and I have a vague feeling she did something like that. She was an MD.

Q: So you really didn't feel, as some women would have, "I gave up my career in the 1940s so why can't you give up yours in the '70s?" I don't think you felt like that.

MARTIN: Oh, no. I was in the older tradition, I would not have thought that. I would have gone anywhere my husband went, and if it was possible to do my job there, I would have done it, but otherwise I would not. I taught English, and we were supposed to meet the local people and I learned the languages - mostly Japanese - and I had a great time with the Japanese women, and I did a lot with them. But that to me was doing the job. So it's a completely different outlook. And by the time I came back here, I did do something for a short time but I couldn't ever go back into chemistry because so many years had elapsed, and they learned all about the nucleus, carbon atoms and what they did, and all this kind of thing that was way beyond me. So I never would have gone back to it. In that sense, yes, I had a mild feeling that I did give up in the Foreign Service any training that I had had because chemistry had gone so far...the sulfur drugs were beginning and penicillin hadn't even come in at that time. I did determinations of Sulfanilamide on human blood for a short time. The whole chemistry field had gone ahead so far that there would be no reason for me to go back again.

Q: Let me ask you one other thing. Since you do remember that you did go to the meeting at the State Department and Dorothy Stansbury was there, was that meeting confrontational?

MARTIN: Yes, to some extent because I was, I suppose, of the old guard in that I felt that I gave up everything for my husband, but that was my duty to do it. I mean, that's why I got married. And there were people there who wanted to continue their professions, and I was a little bit surprised but I didn't say much. I didn't feel it was up to me, I'd gone through all this before.

Q: I wonder if as a result of that, if that group was divided and then you went to Peggy Morgan's to continue the discussion. Do you remember anything drafted at Peggy's house?

MARTIN: No...She invited me to come, and it was a group of people who had experience already. Yes, there were people I didn't know who were older than I. I think there were one or two Ambassadors' wives, for instance. So I felt low down on the scale as it were, but that didn't bother me.

Q: I'm so perplexed by all of this because Dorothy Stansbury, as I mentioned earlier, was a very ardent feminist. And it just seems to me that an ardent feminist would not have issued these guidelines at that particular time because they're so traditional, and they're not representative of what was going on in the women's action organization, which Dorothy was very involved in.

MARTIN: I think it was the younger wives coming in.

Q: Of course it was.

MARTIN: I mean the people like me who'd been overseas...I went over completely green. I would have loved to have had some training beforehand.

Q: You're very nice to give me so much time this afternoon when you didn't have your usual routine. Do you remember signing the guidelines?

MARTIN: Yes, it says "Mrs. James Martin, Jr." here. I remember signing it.

Q: You were [one of] the authors.

MARTIN: Yes, but I was of the old guard, and I didn't say very much because I realized that actually the people coming in were the ones that would be affected. I knew I wasn't going to be in the State Department much longer.

Q: But do you think you signed the guidelines as they stand there?

MARTIN: Yes, I did.

Q: And did everyone have to sign it, all 27 wives?

MARTIN: No, if they wanted to sign, they did. And I was really of two minds about it.

Q: So you really don't know how many of them signed, and how many didn't sign? Do you have any idea? I wonder where that paper is.

MARTIN: And I'm trying to think...I can see the room where we had the meeting, but I cannot figure out where it was.

Q: I would imagine it was at the Foreign Service Institute because Dorothy Stansbury at that time was the director of spouse training.

MARTIN: I guess that's where it was. It was a big room and I remember sitting way in the back, and there were a lot of people there. I thought, "Gee, these are just women's pipe dreams." But, however, I had been at a post where someone had been a doctor, an MD, but she was not American. I think she was English.

Q: So they did talk about jobs and being able to continue a career, because that doesn't appear there. This is still a traditional supportive spouse guideline. That's why it irritated the young people so much, because it didn't give them any option to be an independent individual.

MARTIN: Now this sort of thing! "We were astonished to find that the lists included such things as cleaning the embassy residence." Well, my goodness, everyone had servants. You never cleaned an embassy residence. "Do the serving at a formal dinner." I never did that. "Acting as lady in waiting." I never did that. I just thought this was crazy, and consequently I thought this was sort of a joke, and I really didn't take it very seriously. And, as I say, I hesitated to sign it. But I was there, and I sat in on the meetings, and I put in my two cents worth occasionally. As I remember it, there were a few women who had been in the Service before, but there were a lot of young women there and I guess they were the ones who were pushing for all the reforms. I remember being a little surprised, if that's the way they wanted to go ahead with it, but it didn't seem to me it was up to me to say anything.

Q: I wonder if the majority of women signed this. Because if they sent out the Guidelines, and less than half of the 27 women approved, that wasn't exactly democratic, was it?

MARTIN: Where were these guidelines printed?

Q: As Management Reform Bulletin Number 20, and in State Magazine, which used to be State Newsletter.

MARTIN: I guess I read it there then, I don't know.

Q: They were distributed in the Department, and your husband should have brought them home as Management Reform Bulletin Number 20.

MARTIN: Maybe he did, because vaguely some of it is familiar.

Q: Later two articles appeared in the Foreign Service Journal. One by Carol Pardon, and one by Eleanore Lee, who wrote under the nom de plume, Mary Stuart.

[Machine turned off while they sort through documents]

MARTIN: Most of ours were smaller posts, and we loved the smaller posts because you got to know the people.

Q: You never felt put upon by a principal officer, chief of mission?

MARTIN: My first post in Bombay was MacDonald and he had no wife, he was a bachelor.

Q: So maybe you were perplexed by the need for the guidelines.

MARTIN: No, not really because I understand this. I guess I'd come a long way by that time. But by the time this was done...I felt some of it was sort of ridiculous. So I guess I just let it run off my back and I wasn't perturbed by it.

Q: And you don't remember reading the two articles in the Journal...they came out in September, they came out three months later - September of '71.

MARTIN: We came back in '70.

Q: You were here at the time, and there were two articles... As far as the first meeting with Dorothy Stansbury, who invited you, Dorothy?

MARTIN: I don't even remember that. Yes, I think so. She telephoned me and said could I come, or would I be interested.

Q: Had you known her before?

MARTIN: No, no.

Q: I wonder why she chose you then.

MARTIN: Because I lived in Washington.

Q: But you must have had a reputation as a traditional senior wife.

MARTIN: I knew Peggy Morgan.

Q: But Peggy's name isn't on here, and I don't understand why. It's the type of thing she would have been involved in. [George Morgan retired from the Foreign Service in 1969, and he and Peggy moved to Vienna, Austria.]

***BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: James V. Martin, Jr.

Spouse Entered Service:1946Left Service: 1973You Entered Service:1946Left Service: 1973

Status: Spouse of Retiree

Spouse's Position: Variously consular, administrative, economic, political

Place/Date of birth: Rockford, Illinois, March 30, 1917

Maiden Name: Elizabeth Shaler Smith

Parents (Name, Profession):

Shaler G. Smith, American Insurance Company

Elizabeth Sheldon Smith, Homemaker

Schools (Prep, University):

Rockford High School, Illinois

DePauw University, BA 39

Date/Place of Marriage: Colebrook, Connecticut, June 28, 1941

Children:

Sarah Crosby Martin Brown (Mrs. Robert), b. 1943

Susan Penfield Martin Neal (Mrs. David), b. 1946

David Ludwig Martin, b. 1949

Profession: Research Chemist (lab technician) Boston, Massachusetts

Volunteer and Paid Positions held: At Post: Established co-op nursery school, Bombay, India, 1947; no paid positions after entering the Foreign Service

Honors: (Scholastic, FS):

Mortar Board in college, chairman of electees

End of Interview